CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: September 22, 2010

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Parks Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Urban Forest Inventory Project and Public Information/Community Education - Forestry Program Report – Part 2

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive the second of three reports on the Forestry Program.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this staff report is to provide the Commission with an overview of the Urban Forest Inventory Project and the Forestry Program's public education and outreach efforts. The final report, scheduled for the regular December meeting, will address the development of an urban forest management plan.

Urban Forest Inventory Project

The Urban Forest Inventory Project has three components. The first is a comprehensive baseline inventory of the City's street trees (including existing trees and empty tree sites) and an estimated 75 percent of its park and public facility trees. The second component is a focused inventory of ten percent of the City's street trees to assess the economic value of the City's urban forest. The third component is the development of education materials to enhance public understanding and knowledge of the community benefits provided by trees and the City's urban forest.

The project was initiated in May 2007 with the baseline inventory. The baseline inventory was funded through the Fiscal Year 2007 Forestry Program operating budget. The project was expanded in June 2008 when the Department received a $42,000 grant from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) to conduct the focused inventory and develop educational materials.

The findings from both the baseline inventory and the iTree assessment are discussed in detail in the attached report.

Baseline Inventory

The baseline inventory provides geo-referenced data about most of the City's public trees (all Street trees and 75% of park and public facility trees). In addition to the location of each tree, the database includes the tree species, size (as measured at 4.5 feet from grade), and height. The inventory also includes information about the size of the planting space, whether there are overhead utilities and conflicts with utilities, and maintenance needs. Inventory data was collected using a handheld GPS unit. The inventory data is managed through a database software program called Arbor Access.

Prior to its completion in 2007, the Department had not undertaken an inventory of the location and health of its trees in more than 15 years. In addition, a number of other factors pointed to the need for an up-to-date accounting of the urban forest. These included the switch to new software in 2002, the revision of management techniques due to new City programs, such as street sweeping, and the Department's interest in developing a comprehensive urban forest management plan, among others.

The inventory was completed under contract by West Coast Arborists over a period of six months. The inventory included a total of 36,657 tree sites including 9,300 park trees. Of the street tree sites at the time the inventory, 3,372 were vacant, and 92 had stumps. Not all park trees were included in the inventory, since the Department has significant open space acreage. It is estimated there are at least an additional 3,000 trees within open space parks. Since the inventory was complete, there has been a net increase of 450 street trees.

Arbor Access

The Arbor Access database includes the following information for every tree in the inventory:

- District (City trees are organized by 15 grid areas)
- Address
- Tree number (if there are more than one at a given address)
- Street name
- Location in relation to the property (i.e. Front, Side, or in a Park)
- Species
- DBH (tree diameter at breast height) - in ranges
- Height - in ranges
- Planting space size
- Whether overhead utilities exist and there are conflicts
- Maintenance needs at the time of data collection
- Other necessary attributes

Arbor Access is used daily and has proven to be a useful database and management tool. It is used by Forestry staff to create work orders for individual tree maintenance, to build maintenance work lists for field staff and contractors, research previous work records, and verify tree information. The database is updated whenever there is a change to a tree (pruning, planting, removal). Since the database provides detailed information about the tree, staff can complete many tasks without a field visit.

Focused Inventory - iTree Assessment

As discussed above, the Department was awarded grant funding from CalFire to conduct a focused inventory of the street tree population. The purpose of the focused inventory was to gather additional information so that the Department could articulate the value and function of trees in general, and street trees in particular, in terms of energy conservation, air quality, water quality and property values. Both the baseline inventory and the focused inventory provide valuable information about the environmental, economic and horticultural value of the City's public urban forest.

To conduct the focused inventory, the Department used the iTree population assessment tool called STRATUM developed by the United States Forest Service. The iTree software tools were developed to help communities identify and manage the structure, function, and value of urban tree populations.

Community Tree Guide

The CalFire grant includes the development of a community tree guide. The purpose of the guide is to provide Santa Barbara residents with information about the value of the urban forest, methods for planning, planting and caring for trees, appropriate tree choices for Santa Barbara, and how the City manages public trees. The design of the guide is underway. It is anticipated that it will be complete in mid-November. It will be available on the City's web site, and some hard copies will also be available for the public and for distribution to local organizations that support City efforts to preserve and enhance the urban forest, including Santa Barbara Beautiful, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, Santa Barbara Horticultural Society, and the Men's Garden Club of Santa Barbara, among others.

Public Information and Community Education

The Forestry Program has historically provided public information through the City's web site and a variety of printed materials. The Urban Forest Superintendent and the Street Tree Inspector also respond to telephone and email inquiries on a regular basis.

In addition to the community tree guide discussed above, a number of new outreach and training opportunities are planned to provide additional information regarding tree

care and disseminate information about recent changes in the Municipal Code and City tree preservation practices.

Forestry Web Page

The Forestry section of the Department's web page provides information regarding the number of City trees, benefits of the urban forest, City tree regulations and permit applications, the City's view ordinance, and links to help residents understand proper pruning techniques. Planned updates include posting the community tree guide and tree inventory report, and providing information about the City's tree planting and maintenance program, historic and landmark trees, tree care methods, and additional links to other tree resources.

Printed materials

The following printed materials are currently available in hard copy from the Parks Division office.

- *Santa Barbara's Urban Forest* – a guide to answer frequently asked questions regarding tree planting, maintenance, and removals. Similar information is available on the web page.

- *Trees and Views* – a pamphlet that outlines issues to consider when there is a view dispute, pruning techniques to help avoid destroying trees, how to find and work with a qualified arborist, information to help plan for new trees, and additional resources to help with the process. This pamphlet is on the web page.

- *The Alameda Plazas Self-Guided Tree Tour* – a pamphlet that provides a history of the two park sites and map to locate specific trees. Each tree listing describes the species and provides historical or unique information about the tree.

- *Alice Keck Park Memorial Garden Self-Guided Tree & Plant Tour* – a pamphlet that provides a history of the park and map to locate specific trees and other plants. Each listing describes the species and provides historical or unique information about the plant.

- *Alameda Plazas and Alice Keck Park Memorial Garden Self-Guided Tree Tour* – a Pamphlet that addresses all three park sites but in less details than the previous two.

Training Workshops for Tree and Landscape Professionals

As part of the City's effort to increase public knowledge and understanding of the City's tree regulations, training workshops will be held annually for tree and landscape

industry professionals and property management companies. The Department will track and maintain a list of workshop participants. Although the Department does not provide private residents with tree company recommendations, the workshop participant list will be made available as a resource.

Workshops are tentatively scheduled for mid-November. It is anticipated that two sessions will be offered to increase the likelihood of participation. Over time, it is anticipated that the workshops will help reduce the number of tree violations due to better understanding about the City's tree preservation rules.

ATTACHMENT: Tree Inventory and Assessment Report, September 2010

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